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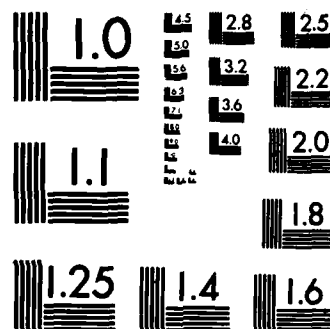
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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM

WHAT ARE LITTLE GIRLS MADE OF?

INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

by

Lieutenant Colonel Suzanne S. Boening
Adjutant General Corps

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US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Suzanne S. Boening, LTC, AGC

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Since the demise of the Women's Army Corps, the US Army has suffered from the absence of a basic philosophy on the proper utilization of women. Four possible ways of looking at the role of women in society and in the Army are examined. The Army needs to select one as a consistent base for logical, explainable policy.

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In September of 1982 the Army announced a major policy change governing its utilization of women. Based on results of a study conducted by the Women in the Army Policy Review Group (WITAPRG)¹, the Army is preparing to take two courses of action which appear to be opposed to one another. It will increase the numbers of women authorized in the force structure while decreasing the Military Occupational Specialties (MOSs) they may hold and the specific areas to which they may be assigned.

The Army plan is to increase the number of enlisted women in the force from 65,000 to 70,000 over the next 5 years.² This figure of 70,000 is based on a projection of jobs available for women in the future. And yet, concurrently with this increase in authorization, new policies are restricting the numbers and types of jobs open to Army women. In an effort to reduce the probability of women being exposed to direct combat, 23 additional MOSs have been added to the list of specialties closed to females. And new physical strength requirements are being developed which may "bar most women from 76 percent of Army jobs . . ."³

Curious. One would expect an increase in authorization to be based on an expanded role for women; or for new restrictions to lead, logically, to a reduction in total authorization. The WITAPRG did not recommend either an increase or a decrease in the total numbers of women to be authorized, but it would be difficult to justify an increase based on the recommended restrictions. What we have here is an apparent attempt to placate both the militant feminist and her (or his) more conservative counterpart by making policy designed to appeal to both. Unfortunately, the result will satisfy neither.

We are making trouble for ourselves with such self-contradictory policy. In a time when there is a push for standardization we are creating a special class of soldier that is not interchangeable with her peers. We are increasing the need for individual management while talking of unit replacement. We are adding to our distribution problems, constraining reassignments, and creating Space-Imbalanced MOS (SIMOS).

WITAPRG is only the latest of (too) many studies done on the subject of women in the Army, and the controversy surrounding the delay in its release as well as the substance of the study itself⁴ practically guarantee that it will not be the last. So who knows how long this latest policy change will remain in effect or how soon women, and the Army, will be jerked around again in an effort to . . . to do what? Ahh-- perhaps "there's the rub." What is the real goal of our latest policy? What has been the real reason for past policies? Upon what philosophical base and to what logical end have our various policies on the utilization of women been formed?

I don't think we have had an articulated, coherent set of assumptions on the proper role of women in the Army since the early days of the Women's Army Corps (where the wartime mission was to release a man for combat and the peacetime mission was to form a nucleus of trained personnel capable of rapid expansion in case of mobilization). In the early 1970's the Army became committed, partly because of the pressure to form an All Volunteer Force, to the role of social agent in the movement for women's equality. Since that time official policy has seesawed between maximizing opportunities for women and minimizing danger to those women and their units. It is difficult to formulate policy without some basic assumptions on the nature of the subject at hand. To do so often results in a series of inconsistent decisions based on pressures of the moment. In order to steer clear (if I

may borrow a naval metaphor) of the Scylla of sex discrimination and the Charybdis of women in body bags, the Army has been forced to base policy on the expediency of the moment. Army leadership has been pressured to please ardent feminists demanding the right of women to be treated just like men, without offending their more conservative brothers and sisters who want women out of fatigues and back behind their typewriters and stethoscopes.

Of course it is one thing to recognize that we need a set of assumptions on the role of women in the Army and another to determine or choose those assumptions. They are part of a larger set of assumptions on the nature of woman herself--a confusing, emotional, political issue. But choose we must. We must give ourselves a philosophical platform upon which we can build a logical, consistent policy that is understandable and defensible to Congress, the media, and ultimately, to the American public. The remainder of this article consists of an examination of possible options. There appear to be four basic ways of looking at the role of women;⁵ four broad philosophies that are at the root of the major arguments heard today and throughout history. I shall describe each philosophy and see what influence, if any, each view has had on the perceived role of women in the Army; I shall look at each position as a possible future basis for Army policy; and finally, I shall examine how each could be applied to the subject of women in combat.

1. Innatism--women as physically and mentally inferior.

This philosophy considers innate inferiority as part of woman's God-given nature. To the innatist, the woman is perceived as smaller, weaker, more easily hurt, prone to nervous instability and adversely affected by hormonal fluctuations. Because she is so inferior to the male, yet so necessary to the survival of the species, the welfare of society demands that she be protected by the male--her father, husband, brother or

guardian. Because of her weaker nervous system and hormonal fluctuations, she needs male supervision and guidance, perhaps even restraint.

This philosophy is the one with which most of us have been inculcated to a greater or lesser degree. It is the basis for many of our customs, protective laws and mores. Young people today may laugh (or shudder) at its Victorian era excesses, but many of the age group that forms our senior leadership are attracted to the traditional conservative values it champions when adopted in a more moderate form.

A believer in the more radical form of innatism would probably see no role at all for women in uniform. He would view the Army as a man's world, totally unsuited for the delicate, sensitive female nature. He might allow nurses to accompany the Army (since nursing is definitely women's work) but there would be no necessity for them to be an integral part of the military structure. Even the moderate view that allowed for the creation of the Women's Army Auxilliary Corps (WAAC) and integration of women in the Regular Army (the WAC) showed a firm basis in innatism. Major General Jeanne Holm tells us that "From the outset, all the services tended to treat enlisted women like immature girls in a boarding school, away from home for the first time."⁶ The role of the women in that Army was very clear: she was a volunteer substitute for a soldier, performing traditional clerical and medical duties behind the lines; thus releasing a "real" soldier for combat.

While we tend to describe such views as old fashioned and unenlightened, the innate view of women is alive and well, if officially quiet, today. Many men and some women in uniform believe that the military has overstepped the bounds of good sense in its desire to function as an equal opportunity employer. They argue for a more restricted role for women in

the Army, maintaining that women are not interchangeable with male soldiers.⁷ In 1980 General Westmoreland put it this way:

In order to make the numbers look better, this administration has told the services to recruit more and more women. . . . The people who are making these judgements don't know what they are talking about. The personnel in the Pentagon and in this administration have lost track of their priorities. They're using the military as a vehicle for social change, disregarding the raison d'être for a military force.⁸

2. Matriarchy--woman as superior to man.

This theory/philosophy places woman at the pinnacle of evolutionary development. Matriarchists, or superior feminists, hold that the female, in all orders of life, represents a higher stage of development than the male.⁹ Beginning with data from the insect world (where the queen bee is the focus of the entire colony and where the preying mantis eats her mate after he plays his brief role) matriarchists reason their way up the biological chain, arriving at a view of man as the weaker of the sexes; weaker, that is, in terms of survival. There are interesting data to support this view. Although more boys than girls are born, more girl babies survive their infancy; in addition, women (who are called a minority) outnumber men. Why? "Because women are more necessary to the survival of the species than men," answers the matriarchist. After all, it takes only one male to fertilize hundreds of females, but human beings reproduce on a ratio of one mother to one offspring. Each woman is of vital importance; individual men are biologically expendable. Dedicated superior feminists trace the origin of the monogamous marriage and the patriarchal state back to the overthrow of an ancient mother-dominated society. There are matriarchists who hold that God is a female deity--the Mother Earth or the "Trunk of Life."

At first glance (or even a second one) this definition of woman seems too "far out" to take seriously. But there are moderate forms of superior feminism being expressed today. Sometimes it is men who express remnants of this philosophy when they speak of "momism" or express fear of the "castrating woman." More often it is women, using the language of equal rights and the feminist movement, who imply that it is because women are superior that they have been subjugated by fearful males.

How would an Army be constructed if matriarchists were at the national helm? Would it be an Army of Amazons, with men employed as slaves or cannon fodder? Or would it be very much as it is now, with women being considered too valuable a national (and human) resource to be placed at risk? Perhaps the matriarchist's army would allow women to serve only in positions of relative physical safety. And perhaps the male soldiers would complain (as they actually do today) "why do they get all the benefits of full service without having to face the dangers of combat?" Is it the fear of matriarchy that makes men in the Army so resentful of perceived female advantages e.g., long hair and maternity leave?

3. Feminism--woman as absolutely equal with man.

The feminism movement is not, as many believe, a modern movement or even a 20th Century development. It was first expressed as a philosophy in 1792, and was part of the philosophical attack against all forms of innatism, whether sexual, religious, racial or political. Philosophers of the Enlightenment Era argued that all men were created equal, that differences resulted from an unequal environment; where opportunities were the same, men would exhibit essentially equal abilities.¹⁰ Feminists in the 18th Century considered the acceptance of the notion of environmental equality to require rejection of the notion of biological determinism. No

person, no social class or sex had mental or physical or psychological advantages placed there deliberately by God (the innate theory). "Differences between soldier and statesman, noble and peasant, savage and gentleman, and man and woman could be explained . . . in terms of the unequal experiences and opportunities permitted each group by society."¹¹

Contemporary feminism, as exemplified by the Women's Liberation Movement¹² of the early 1960's, follows the same basic argument of the feminism of 200 years ago. It is part of the "nurture versus nature" argument. All of those so-called differences between men and women--differences in their type of creativity, their intelligence, their emotions, even their apparent physical dissimilarities are caused by the society (environment) in which they are raised and are not innately present at birth. "Masculinity" and "femininity" are cultural products of artificially assigned sex roles and lack a biological basis. Men and women are absolutely equal; it follows then, that they should be treated with absolute equality by society and all of its institutions, including the United States military establishment. So runs the feminist argument.

Just as many of us were born and raised in a society dominated by sexual innatism, so most of us have been affected, to a greater or lesser degree, by the equal rights claims of feminism in the last 20 years. The basic tenet of feminism is an extension of the philosophy upon which this country was built. The basic equality of all human beings is part of the "American mystique" and we find it hard to argue against its sense of fairness and rightness. The Army is no exception. If one accepts the basic premise of feminism, then it is almost as difficult to argue against total equality for women in the Army as it is to argue against total equality for blacks in the Army. And almost as politically dangerous.

The 1970's saw the Army as a social institution respond to the pressures of the feminist movement by making sweeping changes in its treatment of women. Laws and regulations that discriminated against women financially were changed. In a far-reaching decision the Supreme Court made it possible for women with minor dependents to remain on active duty. The WAC, judged to be protectionist and discriminatory, was eliminated. Women were integrated into units and MOSs that had previously been reserved for men only. All in all, the Army (as well as the other services) became a major instrument of social change. But as much as the Army has wanted to advertise itself as an equal opportunity employer, it has been stopped short of that goal by the issue of women in combat. And it has been that conflict, between the laudible desire to grant full equality to women and the unwillingness to equate equality with substitutability on the battlefield that has caused so many personnel problems for the Army and its women. The Army has forced itself into the philosophical position that women are only a little bit equal; and, in an effort to satisfy both innatists and feminists, has created an ever-changing jumble of personnel policies that dissatisfy both groups. We attempt to placate the women who long to wear crossed rifles by increasing the total number of women allowed in the Army; but then commanders argue that too many women in a given unit weakens its ability to function in combat. Our usual response to this dilemma has been to conduct another study.

Have we not now covered all bases? Have we not reached the end of contingencies? Women are either inferior to men, superior to them, or equal to them. What possible option remains?

As a matter of fact, these three positions, which tend to be rather exclusive of one another, were the only ones available until the 20th Century. Then new scientific knowledge of human beings provided the basis

for the formation of a fourth philosophical position; a position that at first seems to be an eclectic selection from each of the other three, but is truly a fourth option independent of the others.¹³

4. Differential equality--woman and man as different.

Differential egalitarians believe that while both sexes share a large common set of abilities, that each sex also possesses special skills that are directly or indirectly sex-related or determined. Men and women are different from one another in many ways; they each have special abilities that are indispensable to mankind. Thus, differentialists cannot accept the feminist claim of absolute equality (if equal means substitutable, as in mathematics) since things which are different cannot be equal. They also see the futility of comparing women with men to see which group is superior or inferior to the other--the two sexes are not enough alike to be compared. Both men and women share an immense wealth of human characteristics; women possess a certain group of skills more prominent in the human female (language ability for example) while men possess a certain group of skills more prominent in the human male (running ability, for example). Differential egalitarians claim that it has been in the interest of the human race for males to run fast and females to verbalize well with their young, and that these skills, or predispositions, are inherited and sex-linked. Proponents cite recent (20th Century) data in tertiary sexual characteristics as a primary basis for their views. The science of endocrinology shows that the effects of male and female sex hormones are not restricted to the genital (primary) or the obvious secondary sites (breasts, facial skin, etc.) but affect virtually every tissue in the body, giving it a sexual nature. Thus egalitarians believe that the behavioral effects of hormones of boys and girls can be modified but not changed by education, training, or any other aspect of the environment. Only by

administering the male hormone to women or the female hormone to men can you come close to producing the gender-free, sexually neuter (and, therefore, equal) human being.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to find an "official" differential egalitarian view of women in the Army. First of all, most individuals are not aware of that formal classification; a person who reasons his or her way to this position probably considers himself a "feminist with some reservations," or a "liberal innatist." Secondly, differentialists are not popular with the more militant (and more published) feminists, who feel that they (the differentialists) have sold out to the chauvanist sexists. So differential egalitarians (even the label is difficult and does not lend itself to popular use) have not been very visible or very vocal.

However, the basic tenets of this philosophy seem to be consistent with the following view of women and the Army. Since women are basically different (not better or worse or the same, but different) the proper role of women in the Army will depend on a realistic understanding of the Army. It would be more profitable to study the Army, its physical, mental and psychological prerequisites than to continue surveying and studying women. First understand the role of the soldier, then ask whether a woman's special talents make her better suited for that role than man; equally suited or less suited for that role. Compare the special talents of men and women against the standard or standards and select accordingly. This is, of course, an overly simplified, not to say naive argument. It does not account for important social considerations for one thing; for another, it is dependent upon our ability to clearly define the job of the soldier--a task we have not done well in the past.

The latest (WITAPRG) study is an attempt to move in this direction. It addresses the physical requirements for MOS as one of the factors in

determining the suitability of women in that MOS. The other factor, of course, is combat potential.

The issue of women and combat must be part and parcel of any logical consideration of woman's role in the military service. For many of us, perhaps for most, combat becomes the "bottom line" consideration in determining how we view the role of women in the Army. The subject has been written about and discussed exhaustively; I have no desire to rehash its merits (or lack thereof) in this paper. What I do want to do is lay out what I believe is the combat role women would play if each of the four philosophies were made the basis for Army policy.

a. The innatist view. If the Army were to adopt a liberal innatist philosophy, women would not be assigned to combat branches or MOS, or to areas with a probability of combat action, and their safety would be a matter of special, official concern. A conservative innatist viewpoint would probably require a return to the WAC or WAAC.

The innatist sees women as belonging, by nature, to the category of protectee, not protector. Just as individual women have male protectors within the family structure, our nation's womanhood is traditionally protected by the soldier. To many men, inculcated with the innatist principles common to our society, failure to adequately protect women is seen as somehow dishonorable; and requiring, or allowing, women to be placed in a combat position would be proof of that failure. Male soldiers who adhere to this philosophy would be unable to treat female soldiers as equals. They would tend to protect them; perhaps even to the detriment of their mission.

b. The matriarchist view. In my initial discussion of matriarchy I touched on the possible reactions of superior feminists to the question of women in combat. It appears to depend on whether women would be considered

too valuable to be risked in combat or too superior not to be right in the thick of things. For all practical purposes, I suspect the question is moot; the "Amazon mystique" belongs either to a mythological past or a far distant future. I include it in this paper more in the interest of balance and fairness, than of relevancy.

c. The feminist view. If one follows the feminist argument to its logical end, one reaches the conclusion that the only reason women are not now serving in the Infantry is because of the pressure of sexist elements in our society. Since they see no real difference between the sexes that cannot be virtually eliminated by environmental tools such as education and physical training, feminists can see no reason to make an exception for women in combat. Feminists demand the right to serve their country and society in the same full measure as men. (Or, if they would rather not serve, they demand that men have the same right as women to avoid combat service. If you say to a feminist, "I don't want my daughter to be trained to kill people," he or she may well reply, "I don't want my son to be trained to kill people either.")

An Army truly committed to a feminist philosophy would view American womanhood as a virtually untapped "humanpower" resource. It would remove all classification and assignment restrictions save those based on raw strength alone. (Feminists are unhappy about the empirical data indicating that most men have greater brute strength than most women, but few try to argue that it does not exist.)

d. The differential egalitarian view. If the Army were to adopt this philosophy as the basis for its policies on women in combat, it would probably study combat more and women less. The differentialist recognizes that woman has special strengths and certain weaknesses by virtue of her sex alone. Whether or not she is properly suited for a combat role will

depend on how that role, or job, is defined. What are the physical, mental and psychological/emotional demands placed on most combatants? Can most women meet those demands? If the answer is yes, then, barring consideration of sociological factors and the psychological effect on men (very important areas outside the scope of this paper) women should be considered a combat asset and assigned accordingly. If the answer is no, then a series of graduated restrictions must be evaluated. Empirical data (from studies addressing how women might perform in combat, not in combat units) might justify any position from a selected combat role for women to a return to the "separate but equal" status of the Women's Army Corps.

There is a special problem with defining the differentialist's point of view. As I mentioned earlier, it can appear to be an eclectic selection from the three other philosophies. Consider the following views on women in combat expressed by Major General (Retired) Jeanne Holm, former Director of Women in the Air Force, and Brigadier General (Retired) Elizabeth Hoisington, former Director, Women's Army Corps.

General Holm: "I see no reason for any restrictions on the use of women as members of combat air crews. I see no reason why they should not serve aboard combat ships."¹⁴

Sound like a feminist? Yes. But if you read more of General Holm you will find that she has serious reservations about Army women in combat. In other words, she recognizes the vastly different combat roles of the airman, sailor, and the soldier. And the ability to make this careful distinction in the job, while maintaining a consistent policy toward the woman, is one of the advantages of arguing from the differentialist's point of view.

General Hoisington: ". . . in my whole lifetime, I have never known 10 women whom I thought could endure three months under actual combat conditions in an Army unit."¹⁵

Sound like a conservative innatist? Yes. But it could also be the view of a differentialist making an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of women in regard to the special qualifications required in a combat role.

What are little girls made of?
Sugar and spice and everything nice;
That's what little girls are made of.

-Anon

The hand that rocks the cradle is the
hand that rules the world.

-William Ross Wallace

Equality of rights under the law shall not be
denied or abridged by the United States or by
any other State on account of sex.

-Proposed Amendment to the Constitution

Many words cannot make this plainer,
The two sexes are different. . . .

-Supreme Court of the United States

The four options I have described in this paper, each with its range of liberal and conservative interpretation, present a wide and perhaps confusing choice. And the adoption of any one of the four philosophies will lead to the selection of policies and actions which will be unpopular with advocates of any of the other three. I advocate (here) none of the viewpoints. My thesis is that failure to choose one of them has resulted in policy decisions that are inconsistent, illogical and transitory. It is

in the best interest of the Army and of its women for our leadership to
take a stand.

ENDNOTES

1. Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Women in the Army Policy Review.
2. Larry Carney and Don Herst, "Physical Tests to Decide Work," Army Times, 6 September 1982, p. 1.
3. Pete Earley, "New tests for Strength . . .", Washington Post, 31 August 1982.
4. Allen E. Carrier, "Army--Women Study Draws More Criticism," Army Times, 27 December 1982, p. 2.
5. H. Carleton Marlow and Harrison M. Davis, The American Search for Women.
6. Major General (Retired) Jeanne Holm, Women In The Military, An Unfinished Revolution, p. 68.
7. This is, however, not necessarily an innatist view; it could be egalitarian.
8. General (Retired) William C. Westmoreland, "Why US Must Return to the Draft," U.S. News and World Report, 12 May 1980, p. 36.
9. Marlow and Davis, p. 196.
10. Ibid., pp. 110-117.
11. Ibid., p. 118.
12. We must distinguish between two schools that claim this movement: environmental feminists claim absolute equality between the sexes; superior feminists believe that women must be liberated because they are in subjugation to the inferior sex.
13. Marlow and Davis, p. 253.
14. Major General (Retired) Jeanne Holm, "Should Women Fight in War?" U.S. News and World Report, 13 February 1978, p. 53.
15. Brigadier General (Retired) Elizabeth Hoisington, "Should Women Fight in War?" U.S. News and World Report, 13 February 1978, p. 53.

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